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INDUSTRIAL AND CONSTRUCTION STATISTICS

Revised international recommendations for construction statistics

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The present report has been prepared in accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its twenty-eighth session to proceed with the revision of the International Recommendations for Construction Statistics. It contains a brief description of the differences between the original and the revised international recommendations.

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1. At its twenty-eighth session, in 1995, the Statistical Commission requested that the United Nations Statistics Division proceed with the revision of the International Recommendations for Construction Statistics[1] by a consultant and an expert group meeting in this field of statistics.[2] Accordingly, the revised Recommendations were prepared by a consultant and considered and approved by an expert group meeting organized by the Statistics Division from 11 to 13 September 1995. The report of the Expert Group is available to the Commission as a background document.

2. The revised version is similar in nature and content to the original version. It differs, however, in a number of important respects. The differences reflect a greater awareness of the methodological problems in the statistical surveys of construction activities. The main changes are described below:

(a) The revised version contains a more comprehensive and detailed discussion of statistical units, including the use of unregistered units, construction sites, and building projects and permits;

(b) The revised version takes explicit account of own-account construction by households, considered important for developing countries, and recommends methodology and content for surveys of this component of construction activity;

(c) Whereas the original version implicitly organized its recommended system of surveys in terms of the frequency with which different components of overall construction would be addressed, the revised version is more concerned with the methodology by which each of the components may be addressed. Little attention is thus given to the question of frequency, which is considered a function of the statistical infrastructure of each country, to be addressed only in the context of the whole statistical system;

(d) In keeping with its increased attention to methodological problems, the revised version sets out "Data collection guidelines" in a form intended to be useful not only for determining survey content but also for the construction of actual questionnaires. Further, these guidelines relate to the type of unit being addressed rather than, as in the original version, to the state of development of the country in which the survey is conducted or the frequency with which it is conducted. This reorientation permits the guidelines to be considerably expanded in terms of distinguishing the components of construction activity (e.g., the distinction between capital and current repairs) with a view to their correct treatment in the System of National Accounts;

(e) The revised version includes specific requirements for data on taxes on production and subsidies. It also provides annexes on the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Third Revision,[3] the System of National Accounts, 1993[4] and the Provisional Central Product Classification,[5] which make it more self-contained than was the original version;

(f) Although the special circumstances of developing countries are recognized in many specific instances throughout the revised version, there is no separate chapter or annex devoted to those circumstances (as in the previous

version). It is considered that statistical agencies in such countries will be able to work out for themselves the necessary modifications and adaptations of the general recommendations;

(g) The assignment of priorities to individual data items was not considered a useful feature by the Expert Group and has been dropped from the revised version;

(h) The collection of data on the "number and capacity of most important items of machinery and equipment" was not considered feasible by the Expert Group and has been dropped from the data collection guidelines.

3. The draft text of the revised International Recommendations for Construction Statistics is before the Commission for its views and possible adoption.

Notes

[1] Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 47 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.68.XVII.11).

[2] Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 8 (E/1995/28), para. 16 (d).

[3] Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 4, Rev.3 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.90.XVII.11).

[4] Series F, No. 2, Rev.4 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.XVII.4).

[5] Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 77 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.91.XVII.7).